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Toda

[See category 234 for complete information about Toda buffaloes]

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special directions, and there are special features of the organisation of buffaloes and dairies not only in each of the two chief divisions of the Toda people, but also in many of the clans of which each division is composed.

I propose in this chapter to sketch some of the chief features of the buffalo and dairy organisation, and in succeeding chapters there will follow detailed accounts of the different dairies and of the ceremonial which accompanies the daily work of the dairy and the important events of buffalo life.

THE DAIRY ORGANISATION

The first distinction to be made concerns the buffaloes. These animals are divided into those of a sacred character and those which may be called 'ordinary buffaloes.' The latter are known as *putiir*; they may be kept at any village, are tended by the men and boys of the village—in Toda language, they are tended by *perol*, or ordinary persons—and their milk is churned in the front part of the dwelling-hut. There is no special ritual of any kind connected with these buffaloes or with their milk, and there are no restrictions on the use of the milk or its products.

The classification of the sacred buffaloes is very different in the two divisions of the Toda people. The Teivaliol possess only one class of sacred buffalo and these buffaloes are called collectively *pasthir*. The Tartharol, on the other hand, have several classes of sacred buffalo, and, so far as I could ascertain, they have properly no collective term for all of them, though they are often spoken of by the Teivali term, *pasthir*.

Possessing only one kind of sacred buffalo, the dairy organisation of the Teivaliol is comparatively simple. The milk of the *pasthir* is churned in dairies at the more important villages of each clan. The dairy is, in general, called *pali*,[1] and the dairyman is called *palikartmokh*, 'dairy watch-boy,' or *palikartpol*, 'dairy watch-man,'[2] according to his age; but,

[1] This word should probably be *paḷḷi* and was usually pronounced *paḷṭhḷi*, but I have adopted the spelling of the text for the sake of simplicity.

[2] According to some Todas, *kart* was a shortened form of *karitht*, milking or milked.

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his dairy the *palol* always turns to the left, so that he faces north-east as he goes towards his buffaloes. In a few dairies the door faces directly west, and, according to Breeks, this is the case at the conical dairy of Anto. 343

THE TODA BUFFALO

The Toda buffalo is a variety of the Indian water-buffalo; but the life on the hills seems to have produced a much finer animal than that of the plains. Although thoroughly under the control of the Todas, the buffaloes are semi-wild and often attack people of a different race from their owners, and Europeans have frequently been severely injured by the onslaught of these animals. 136 231 234 825

The Toda name for the male buffalo is *er*, and for the female *ir*, but either term may be used when the people speak of buffaloes collectively. Calves have different designations at different ages. A young calf is *kar*, one from one to two years of age is *pòl*, and a three-year-old calf is *nakh*.

Defective buffaloes, and especially those with only one horn, are called *kwadrir*, and those whose horns bend downwards are *kughir*. Barren buffaloes are called *maiir*.

There are considerable differences of colour among the buffaloes. Those much lighter than the rest are called *nerir* or *pushtir*, and there is a legend about the origin of these buffaloes, which, however, I failed to obtain. The only obvious way in which the animals differ from one another in marking is that some have a black stripe running down either side of the neck very much in the position which would be occupied by the chain suspending a bell.

There do not seem to be any physical differences between the buffaloes of different classes, and, as we shall see shortly, the nature of the breeding of the Toda buffaloes is such as would have entirely destroyed any distinctions of the kind if they had ever existed.

Every adult female buffalo has an individual name, which is usually given when her first calf is born. The number of buffalo names is limited, so that many buffaloes bear the same name. 234 552

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Ön had a son called Püv. One day when Püv was acting as *palikartmokh* at Kuudr, he was churning in the dairy with a ring on the little finger of his right hand. When the dairyman goes to fetch water he should always take the churning stick out of the *patat* or vessel in which the milk is churned. On this occasion Püv left it in the *patat* and went out to fetch water. As he was going a black bird called *karpüls* tried to check him, saying "*tls, tls, tls,*" meaning "Don't go to the water," but Püv paid no attention and went on. When he was taking the water the ring dropped from his little finger into the spring. Püv saw the ring in the water, but could not reach it, and so he got into the spring. The water was not deep, and yet as soon as he stepped into the spring it completely covered him and he was drowned. When Ön found that his son was lost he cried very bitterly and covered himself with his cloak (*tuni*). (Ön is said to have been a *palol* at this time.) When Ön covered himself he looked downwards and saw, as through a veil, his son in Amnòdr playing with the ring, putting it on and off his finger.[1]

When Ön saw that his son was in Amnòdr he did not like to leave him there alone and decided to go away to the same place. So he called together all the people and the buffaloes and the trees to come and bid him farewell. All the people came except a man of Kwòdrdoni named Arsankutan. He and his family did not come. All the buffaloes came except the *arsaiir*, the buffaloes of the Kwòdrdoni *ti*. Some trees also failed to come. Ön blessed all the people, buffaloes and trees present, but said that because Arsankutan had not come he and his people should die by sorcery at the hands of the Kurumbas, and that because the *arsaiir* had not come they should be killed by tigers, and that the trees which had not come should bear bitter fruit. Since that time the Todas have feared the Kurumbas, and buffaloes have been killed by tigers. All the Todas and all the buffaloes appear to have suffered for the evil deeds of Arsankutan and the *arsaiir*.

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Then Ön went away to Amnòdr, taking the buffaloes

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[1] According to another account, Püv died from trying to catch the image of a white calf in the water. At that time, it was the custom to kill and bury any calf of a white colour, and one had been buried close to the spring.

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both into a vessel. An incantation is said, the same as, or similar to, that already given, while the *utkòren* strokes the sick man with the corner of his cloak. After the incantation the sufferer drinks the juice.

VARIOUS MAGICAL REMEDIES

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The *utkòren* also practise various other methods of treatment.

Headache. This is called *madersnûdr*, "if head aches." For this the *utpol* places his hand on the head of the sufferer, and says the following incantation in a low voice, so that the patient may not distinguish what is being said.[1] After the names of the four gods, as in previous formulæ, it runs:—

nâkkerov	*mad*	*tathi kan*	*tath mâ;*	*ker*	*mad tathi*
cobra	head	broken into pieces	not break may;	a snake	&c.

kan tath mâ;

and the same formula is repeated, substituting first the names of other kinds of snake and then of other animals. The following are the animals mentioned: *kûrûpatz*, a black poisonous snake; *putpob*, a variegated snake, which is called the foolish snake, because it will not get out of the way; *taverûni*, a green snake; *pâlipob*, another green snake; *uitch*, a kind of lizard reputed to suck blood; *antli*, a squirrel; *kapan*, a frog; *tugûli*, a crayfish (?); *kadrmad*, a water animal of some kind; *mîu*, a fish; *tgal*, an earthworm; *nelnpüf*, an insect found under stones; *dpipüf*, an insect found in buffalo dung. After all these animals have been mentioned with the same formula, the names of Pithioteu and Ön are again uttered, followed by the words *tathkhma*. The *utpol* flicks the corner of his cloak first against the ground, and then against the forehead of the sufferer, and then, if the man is sitting, he says, "*ateuk ir*," "sit there off!" and the man moves a little way from the place where he had been sitting. If the man is unable to sit, and is lying down, the words will be "*ateuk padr*," "lie there off!" or "lie a little way off!"

[1] I think it is probable that all the incantations are said in this manner, but I only had it specifically mentioned in this case.

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755 825 I could not obtain a satisfactory account of the exact meaning of the incantation; it was said to mean "may the snake's head be broken in pieces, and so may your head be broken"—*i.e.*, so may the pain go; another rendering was "may the pain go to the snake's head," the latter being by far the more probable meaning. Three divisions of the incantation are recognised: in the first, snakes only are mentioned; in the second, things which live in the water; and in the third, things which live in the earth. The treatment is repeated on one or two days, if necessary, but it is never done more than three times, "because the ailment is always cured in that time."

755 924 Another condition treated by the *utkòren* is stomach-ache, which is called *püfkwatnûdr*, "if worms bite." The *utpol* places his hand on the belly of the sufferer, and after reciting the names of the four gods, he continues:—

kêrs	*pûv*	*kâdkanm*	*kâl*	*mâ;*
kêrs tree	flower	fallen as fall	down	may;

and this formula is repeated, substituting the names of various trees and other plants for the name of the *kêrs* tree. The trees and plants mentioned are *pirzkh* and *kûrêrs*, trees having edible fruit; *pül*, *ktl*, *kwadriki*, *kid*, trees from which bees get honey; *kab*, sugarcane; *teg*, coco-nut; *patm*, samai; *ners*, rice; *eri*, ragi; *kltj*, potato; *perigi*, chillies; *melkh*, pepper; *kwatimeli*, Coriandum sativum; *kadrkh*, mustard; and *kîri* or *kîrsi*, red amaranth.

Thus the last clause would run: *kîri pûv kâdkanm kâl mâ*, and this would be followed by the names of Pithioteu and Ön. Then the *utpol* flicks his cloak three times, first against the ground and then against the belly of the sufferer, and says, "*ateuk ir*," or "*ateuk padr*," according as the man is sitting or lying down, and the sufferer moves a little from his place.

The names of flowers are used because the Todas believe that worms come from eating honey, and the honey has come from flowers. The flowers mentioned belong to four groups;[1] (i) those of trees which bear edible fruits; (ii) those from which bees get honey; (iii) those of trees or plants part of

[1] This distinction was pointed out to me by my informant.

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time were thought to be sufficient for his purpose. It is also possible, however, that the similarity of prayer and spell points to a time when the functions of priest and sorcerer were combined in one person; that as the restrictions which hedge round the life of the dairyman-priest increased, it became impracticable for him to exert his magical functions, and that there has therefore come about a differentiation of function, though the means used continue to show a close resemblance.

It may perhaps be said that the clear evidence of the supposed influence of the gods takes the facts which have been described in this chapter out of the realm of magic and puts them in that of religion. The Toda's methods of procuring ill to his neighbours are clearly in their essential nature of a magical kind, but their close blend with religious ideas is the reason why I have considered them in their present place.

Omens

The Todas do not pay much attention to omens, but meeting certain animals is regarded as lucky or unlucky. The most definite instance of an omen-animal is a black bird called *karpüls*, which is said to be the Indian cuckoo. If a Toda is going on an errand and sees this bird on the left side, he takes it as a bad omen and turns back; if on the right side, it is a good omen. This bird appears twice in Toda legend. It warned Püv, the son of Ön, and in the last scene of the life of Kwoten, it appeared going from left to right. It is noteworthy that when Erten is interpreting the omen in this legend, he brings in Naraian (Narayan), who is certainly not a Toda deity, and this suggests that the whole incident of the omen-bird may be an accretion to the legends, and that the belief in omens has been borrowed from the Badagas or other Hindus.

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Only on one point is it clear that the Todas make no direct gain from their buffaloes. When once a buffalo is dead, the Todas seek no further profit, and the carcases become the property of the Kotas. But even here there is an indirect gain, for the bodies of the buffaloes form a large part of the equivalent received by the Kotas for the many services they render to the Todas.

Other Animals

The Todas have so highly developed the cult of one animal that they show few traces of belief in the sanctity of others. I will put together here the whole of the scanty evidence which I possess concerning their relations with animals in general.

The Tiger.—The Todas have a legend that at one time the tiger used to watch over the buffaloes for them during the day and hand over his charge in the evening. One day the tiger was very hungry and its hunger made it angry. When it brought the buffaloes back to the village it saw a cat catching a rat. Then the tiger asked the cat for some of the flesh, but the cat said, "There is no fool like you; why don't you eat some of the buffaloes you look after?" At that time the tiger usually slept at the village, but on this evening it went into the wood and at midnight came slowly back and took one of the buffaloes out of the pen, and since then it has always done this.

According to another legend (see p. 185), buffaloes have been killed by tigers ever since the *arsaiir* of the Kwòdrdoni *ti* failed to come to the general gathering which assembled to bid farewell to Ön when he went to rule over Amnòdr.

Jervis[1] states that the natives of the hills salaam to the tiger. He does not say definitely that it is the Todas who do this, but it is probable that he is referring to them. He also states that the women of the village throw themselves on their knees before a tiger which has been killed, and touch his bristles with their foreheads. I do not know whether these practices are still followed.

[1] Falls of the Cavery, 1834, p. 49.

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825 As we have seen (p. 417), there is a belief that a man who fails in the performance of certain sacred duties may be killed by a tiger, but the Todas do not appear to fear this animal except on behalf of their buffaloes, and I could only learn of one case in which a Toda had been killed, and as his name was not known it must have occurred very long ago, or may have been altogether mythical.

The Jackal.—I was told by my interpreter that he had seen the Todas saluting a jackal, but I did not hear of any beliefs associated with the practice.

825 262 194 *The Sambhar.*—The most interesting point in connexion with this animal is the fact that the Todas are undoubtedly permitted to eat its flesh. Kutadri, who was most scrupulous in his obedience to the customs of his people, had no reluctance in eating sambhar flesh, and when he had fallen ill soon after, he never thought of ascribing his illness to what was probably its real cause, which shows clearly that there could have been no idea that he had done anything forbidden or unorthodox.

The fact that the Todas may eat the flesh of the sambhar while taking that of no other animal, except ceremonially, might well be looked upon as an indication that there may at one time have been totemic restrictions on food. In their earlier homes, before they reached the Nilgiri Hills, it is probable that the sambhar was an unknown animal, and could not therefore have been a totem. Consequently, when they came to the Nilgiris, they would have found there an animal on the eating of the flesh of which there were no restrictions, and the absence of restriction would, on this hypothesis, have continued to the present day. The eating of sambhar flesh would be the proverbial exception that proves the rule.

[324] It seems to me possible, however, that there is a different reason for the absence of any prohibition. The Todas have no weapons with which they could kill a sambhar, and if this animal is ever killed by Kotas or Kurumbas, the mere fact that it had been killed by these people would probably be a sufficient reason why the Todas should not eat its flesh.

It is possible that it is only since the advent of Europeans

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174 to the Nilgiris, and the extensive slaughter of sambhar which
262 followed it, that the Todas have thought of eating the flesh of
this animal, and as no prohibition against the eating of its
825 flesh has been handed down to them, they have no reluctance
in satisfying in this way the liking for animal food which the *erkumptthpimi* ceremony keeps in existence if it does not actually stimulate it.

231 *The Cat.*—This animal, which is called *koti* or *kwoti*, is
825 domesticated by the Todas. The cat is mentioned in the legend of the tiger recorded in this section, and the earliest writers on the Todas speak of them as keeping these animals. I have seen them on the walls of the dairies, and believe that they are allowed to go wherever they please. The only occasion on which they come into ceremonial is at the *erkumptthpimi* sacrifice, where the spleen is specially put aside to be given to the cat, and is on this account called *kwotinerûf*.

The dog occurs in the story of Kwoten and several other animals are mentioned in the prayers and incantations, chiefly as sources of danger to the buffaloes. In the incantation for the relief of headache given on p. 265, the names of many animals are uttered, probably with the intention that their heads may acquire the pain which is being charmed away from the head of the sufferer.

Trees and Plants

778 The most sacred tree of the Todas is undoubtedly the *tudr*
824 (Fig. 58). This name is given by the Todas to two species, *Meliosma pungens* and *M. wightii*, the two trees resembling one another closely.

The bark is largely used in the dairy ceremonial, and especially in the ordination ceremonies of the *palol* and other dairymen drawn from the Teivaliol and Melgarsol. Its use is especially connected with the people of these sections of the Toda community, but the rest of the Tartharol undergo a ceremony at the second funeral in which *tudr* is used, and this was said to have the purpose that every Toda should be purified with *tudr* before he enters on the future life.

A log and leaves of *tudr* are also used in the ceremony of

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342 and of sufficient dimensions to entirely block up the entrance. This sliding door is inside the hut, and so arranged and fixed on two stout stakes buried in the earth, and standing to the height of 2½ to 3 feet, as to be easily moved to and fro. There are no other openings or outlets of any kind, either for the escape of smoke, or for the free ingress and egress of atmospheric air. The doorway itself is of such small dimensions that, to effect an entrance, one has to go down on all fours, and even then much wriggling is necessary before an entrance is effected. The houses are neat in appearance, and are built of bamboos closely laid together, fastened with rattan, and covered with thatch, which renders them water-tight. Each building has an end walling before and behind, composed of solid blocks of wood, and the sides are covered in by the pent-roofing, which slopes down to the ground. The front wall or planking contains the entrance or doorway. The inside of a hut is from 8 to 15 feet square, and is sufficiently high in the middle to admit of a tall man moving about with comfort. On one side there is a raised platform or [352] pial formed of clay, about two feet high, and covered [825] with sāmbar (deer) or buffalo skins, or sometimes with a mat. This platform is used as a sleeping place. On [354] the opposite side is a fire place, and a slight elevation, on which the cooking utensils are placed. In this part [353] of the building, faggots of firewood are seen piled up from floor to roof, and secured in their place by loops of rattan. Here also the rice-pounder or pestle is fixed. [415] The mortar is formed by a hole dug in the ground, 7 to 9 inches deep, and hardened by constant use. The other household goods consist of three or four brass dishes or plates, several bamboo measures, and some- [412] times a hatchet. Each hut or dwelling is surrounded

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778 823 539 following day, the nephew went alone to the spot where the honey was hidden, and found, to his disappointment, that the honey was leaking through the bottom of the bamboo measures, which were transformed into two snakes. Terrified at the sight thereof, he ran away, but [825] the snakes pursued him (may be they were hamadryads, which have the reputation of pursuing human beings). After running a few minutes, he espied a hare (*Lepus nigricollis*) running across his course, and, by a skilful manœuvre, threw his body-cloth over it. Mistaking it for a man, the snakes followed in pursuit of the hare, which, being very fleet of foot, managed to reach the sun, which became obscured by the hoods of the reptiles. [821] This fully accounts for the solar eclipse. The honey, which leaked out of the vessels, became converted into the Paikāra river.

233 166 In connection with the migrations of the herds of buffaloes, Dr. Rivers writes as follows. "At certain seasons of the year, it is customary that the buffaloes both of the village and the ti should migrate from one place to another. Sometimes the village buffaloes are accompanied by all the inhabitants of the village; sometimes the buffaloes are only accompanied by their dairyman and one or more male assistants. There are two chief reasons for these movements of the buffaloes, of which the most urgent is the necessity for new grazing-places . . . . The other chief reason for the migrations is that certain villages and dairies, formerly [796] important and still sacred, are visited for ceremonial purposes, or out of respect to ancient custom." For the following note on a buffalo migration which he came across, I am indebted to Mr. H. C. Wilson. "During the annual migration of buffaloes to the Kundahs, and when they were approaching the bridle-path leading from